

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 11, line 9 with the following amended paragraph:

The structure of magnetic region 24 substantially impacts the variation in the switching for an array of MRAM devices. In the preferred embodiment, to minimize the variation in the switching field H_{sw} , the magnetic layer (i.e. layer $[[11]]$ 36) in magnetic region 24 adjacent to nonmagnetic spacer region 22 is formed to have a thickness greater than layer 38 and in the range of 40 Å to 120 Å. A thicker layer 36 has been found to significantly improve the magnetic properties of layer 36 so that H_{sw} is approximately equal from one MRAM device to another. In general, it has been found that the switching variation of the elements within the array is impacted by the quality of the magnetic material initially deposited on the nonmagnetic separating layer 22. Therefore, the essence of this patent is to optimize the material quality of layer 36, and retain acceptable switching characteristics by making layer 36 part of a SAF structure. As mentioned above SAF structures provide a reduction in the formation of magnetization vortices (where the magnetization direction is not uniaxial but circular) and a way to control the switching field. See United States Patent No. 6,531,723.